

## Book Review

*Wielding The Force: The Science of Social Justice*

Zainab Amadahy

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Reviewed by Eleanor D. Glor

This book was a challenge for me, because I guess I have always considered myself an empiricist. That's why I read the book, to challenge myself. Zainab Amadahy indicates the book is primarily aimed at progressive activists, especially those who have become angry, and that she does workshops with these groups. Some of the material in the book derives from these workshops, but it provides scholarly support for what she says. *Wielding The Force: The Science of Social Justice* does not provide new empirical evidence for what she says, except her own experience, her learnings from participants in her workshops, and the scholarly sources she references. She integrates a great many teachings about the world and the human experience.

In *The Science of Social Justice* (I am going to use the book's subtitle because this is the part I am most interested in), Zainab Amadahy describes herself as a singer/songwriter and community activist, mentioning that she is of African American, Cherokee (Tsalagi) and European descent. She is thus a typical Canadian but draws much from Indigenous side. On her 2024 website she says she is an author of screenplays, nonfiction, and futurist fiction, the most notable being "an adequately written yet somehow futurist cult classic". She has a university degree and is based in Toronto, Canada.

Amadahy draws a good deal on Indigenous teachings about the nature of the world. Many Indigenous peoples, especially from North America, do not believe, as Europeans historically did, that only humans have spirits. Instead, many Indigenous people believe that all living things have spirits and also that inanimate things like rocks and water also have spirits. Amadahy does not so much push these ideas as explain them and put them out there for consideration. She explains how Indigenous people relate to them and includes a very interesting discussion of how water reorganizes itself based on the feelings around it.

Amadahy is worried about the health and wellbeing of some activists, especially those who are living difficult and unhealthy lives. She believes and makes the argument that old wisdom can inform and reinforce their work for social justice (page 12). She thinks that relational world views have the most to offer. Many others have begun to think the same way, but they support their perspectives in different ways than Amadahy does. Intrinsic to this way of

thinking are family, responsibility, diversity, belief, balance (pp. 35-37), sharing, generosity, reciprocity, wellness practices, and cooperation (pp. 38-40).

One of the ways Amadahy supports this focus is through a discussion of why placebos are almost as effective as pharmaceuticals. The placebo effect demonstrates the power of belief on our bodies (p. 56). Our thoughts and feelings play a significant role in wellness (p. 57). So do our relationships to self and to other people. Humans are truly social people. She also points out that prolonged stress biases the brain structure toward negativity. Our thoughts and emotions affect our bodies at the level of biochemistry, physical structure and genes, and can also affect the bodies of others (p. 58-9). This knowledge is better supported than one might think.

What Amadahy has to say differs from New Ageism. She suggests that “many New Agers like to collect Indigenous teachings, repackage and sell them. In a form of spiritual colonialism, they have misinterpreted some important tenets. (p 60). One of the areas of difference is the role of the heart in the body and in interpersonal relationships. She speaks of the heart’s intelligence.

Of particular interest to *The Innovation Journal*’s readers might be her assertion of the key importance of gratitude and compassion and how it positively impacts problem solving, creativity and innovativeness.

Amadahy suggests it is impossible to achieve social justice through actions based in anger (p. 135). Crucial to post-capitalist economic models are cooperation, generosity, appreciation, compassion and sustainability, that are necessary to the flourishing of life. Indigenous and Christian cultures constantly express appreciation, but Indigenous cultures do so more broadly than Christians. Amadahy points out that interacting with and respecting the integrity of other species and the planet is crucial to our collective wellbeing and survival as a human species.

## **About the Author:**

**Eleanor D. Glor** is Editor-in-Chief and Founding Publisher of *The Innovation Journal: The Public Sector Innovation Journal (TIJ)* ([www.innovation.cc](http://www.innovation.cc)) and *La Revue de l’innovation : La Revue de l’innovation dans le secteur public* (<https://innovation.cc/fr/>). She is Fellow, McLaughlin College, York University, Toronto, Canada. As a practitioner, she worked for the Government of Canada, two Canadian provincial governments, a regional municipality and a city. Eleanor has published about public innovation in the areas of aging, rehabilitation, public health, aboriginal health, the Province of Saskatchewan, other Canadian governments. She has published seven books, five chapters and 46 peer-reviewed articles on public sector innovation from an organizational, especially a public service perspective. Eleanor published five articles in a special issue on Public Innovation in Saskatchewan, Canada, *TIJ*, 28(1), 2023 (<https://innovation.cc/allissues/>) and Research and Publishing on Collaboration and Innovation in the Public Sector, in *TIJ*, 29(1), 2024. Her most recent book is *Antecedents Predict Introduction and Fate of Public Innovations and their Organizations* (<https://innovation.cc/document-library/books/>). Email address: [glor@magma.ca](mailto:glor@magma.ca)